High Water Level Working Group Update
What Have We Done and What's Next?

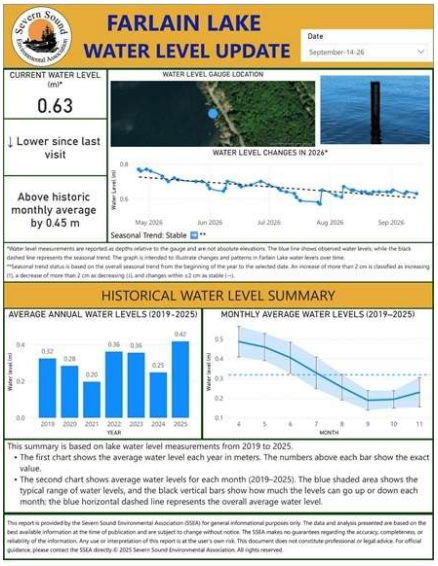
In April 2026, the Farlain Lake Community Association (FLCA) Board of Directors created a working group to investigate potential contributing causes of Farlain Lake's extreme high water levels. Since 2015, water levels have stayed relatively high rather than undergoing significant seasonal recession, as they once did.

The High Water Level Working group is comprised of several concerned residents (show above) who volunteered to help increase our understanding of why water levels might be rising and how to address this. Members include full-time and seasonal residents, from long-time owners to recent arrivals, giving the group varied knowledge and understanding of lake levels, dating back to the early 1950s.

The task before us is to understand why water levels continue to rise, and what may be contributing to this ongoing increase.

Everyone who lives and/or spends time on the water is being affected to some degree. We are seeing trees die, shorelines erode, beaches disappear, and, in some cases, the loss or flooding of dwellings. There is also growing environmental concern, with increasing risk of septic failure from submersion, and potential contamination of lake water.

The lake also contains numerous dead tree stumps that are now well below four feet of water. Stumps that are estimated to be more than 150 years old. This provides important evidence that the lake has now experienced significantly different water levels over its history. The measurements and conditions we are seeing raise serious questions about what has changed and what is contributing to rising water levels.



The rising water level issue has been ongoing since the spring of 2015. A review of the lake level measurements since 2015 helps put things in perspective. A gauge installed by a property owner at the southwest end of the lake showed a level of 4.4 cm in May of 2015, 45 cm in May of 2016, 55 cm in May of 2017 and 65.5 cm in May of 2018. In June 2019, the FLCA worked with the SSEA and Township to permanently install a gauge located in the lake near the mailboxes on Andrew Drive at the southeast end of the lake. Since then measurements have been taken by FLCA Citizen Scientists and submitted to the SSEA continuously from ice out to late fall annually. At that time, the level was 53 cm. This year, the level was at an historical high of 76 cm as shown on the left in the chart provided by the SSEA. As of September 30 this year, the level was till at 63 cm.

In 2018, the SSEA noted in a report that to determine the possible cause of the fast-rising increase in water, a hydrogeological study on the north end of the lake should be considered to help determine the possible cause of rapid and sustained increase in water levels. This was followed up by a request for funding support made to the Tiny Township Council in 2019 which was denied. Since then, although the changing levels continued to be monitored by both the SSEA and the (FLCA) was also dealing with the rapidly expanding threat of Eurasian watermilfoil. With limited resources, the immediate focus was placed on that emerging threat. Given that the EWM is being effectively managed with the application of ProcellaCOR FX and given the historical high level and flooding experienced this year, the Working Group began meeting in May to revisit this issue and identify questions that need to be answered.

Our Questions

Why is the water continuing to rise rather than following the seasonal patterns previously observed?

- Did something specific change around 2015?
- To what extent have new development and infrastructure changes impacted the watershed?
- Has drainage changed?
- What does the overall water balance tell us?

What is causing the continued rise?

- Are there changes in groundwater or surface-water inputs?
- Are causes natural, human, or climate related?
- Has something altered the lake's ability to drain?
- How much is development contributing?

How can the problem be addressed?

Before any solution can responsibly be considered, we need to understand the cause.

That is why the Working Group continues to support an independent hydrogeological study, as first recommended by the SSEA in 2018.

We would all like to see the water level brought back to a safer and more sustainable level, and many have brought forward draining the lake as a solution. But there is an important question that must be answered before that could be considered:

Where would the water go?

Awenda Provincial Park has indicated that pumping onto its property is not an option. One potential alternative would involve pumping approximately two kilometres to Georgian Bay. This presents significant technical, environmental, regulatory, and financial challenges. We

recognize that it should also not move forward without first understanding the underlying hydrology and obtaining the necessary approvals.

There is also the question of who will pay for any studies and potential intervention. Funding has been one of our biggest challenges.

Our Work to Find Answers

In June and July, we undertook a major community effort to document the impacts around Farlain Lake. Residents provided photographs, personal accounts, historical information, and other supporting evidence. We distributed cards and letters, installed signs, gathered information from residents around the lake, and assembled a comprehensive proposal documenting the situation. The next step was intended to be a presentation seeking support for a scientific study through the Township at the annual Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in August. Although we were ultimately unable to do so, the process opened the door to additional conversations and strengthened our determination to continue looking for answers and funding.

We have explored potential assistance through municipal, provincial, and emergency-management channels. We have spoken with representatives from Emergency Preparedness and Response, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

While several avenues were not available to us directly for one reason or another, these conversations have helped to identify other potential opportunities. We are continuing to pursue them.

What We Are Seeking

To be clear, the High Water Level Working Group is not advocating for a specific pumping project, drainage solution, compensation claim, or engineering fix at this stage. We first need the science.

To quote from our proposal book;

"The Farlain Lake Community Association Working Group recognizes that there are currently many theories regarding the causes of the sustained high-water levels affecting Farlain Lake. These theories include climate-related precipitation trends, watershed development, groundwater dynamics, historical drainage patterns, wetland changes, and possible infrastructure influences. At present, however, there is insufficient scientific information available to confirm, quantify, or prioritize any of these potential contributing factors.

Accordingly, the Working Group's primary objective is not to advocate for any specific mitigation measure, pumping strategy, drainage project, compensation claim, or engineering solution. Rather, our immediate objective is to obtain the scientific information necessary to properly understand the

hydrology, groundwater conditions, watershed characteristics, and north-end corridor dynamics of the Farlain Lake system.

The Working Group therefore supports pursuing an independent hydrogeological assessment focused on the north end of Farlain Lake and the adjacent corridor lands, including characterization of groundwater movement, topography, wetlands, springs, and potential hydrological connections within the broader watershed.

The Working Group believes that evidence-based understanding must precede discussions regarding mitigation options, infrastructure concepts, regulatory approaches, or funding opportunities.

The Working Group further recognizes that the newly identified involvement of Awenda Provincial Park lands creates an opportunity for collaborative watershed stewardship involving the FLCA, Tiny Township, Ontario Parks, SSEA, and other stakeholders.

Our focus moving forward should be to establish a common scientific understanding of this poorly characterized watershed system so that any future decisions are informed by evidence rather than assumptions."

We are committed to doing the work, finding the right partners, pursuing funding, and getting the answers our lake and our community deserve.